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Country note**

Thailand

Summary

The Executive Director presents the country note for Thailand for a programme of cooperation for the period 2002 to 2006.

The situation of children and women

1. Thailand's Ninth National Economic and Social Development Plan (2002-2006) provided an opportunity to harmonize the planning cycles of UNICEF and the Government, and to develop common strategies for addressing the priority issues of children. It also facilitated the harmonization of the UNICEF programme cycle with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund, within the framework of the Common Country Assessment (CCA) (1998) and the ongoing United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process. As such, the current country programme cycle (1999-2003) is being adjusted, and a new country programme is being developed for 2002-2006.

2. The End-Decade Review provided an updated situation analysis and highlighted accomplishments as well as current and emerging challenges. The End-Decade Review of Thailand indicates that most of the World Summit for Children goals have already been met or are on track to be achieved. The accessibility of basic services for the majority of the population is very good. Immunization

* E/ICEF/2001/2.

** An addendum to the present report containing the final country programme recommendation will be submitted to the Executive Board for approval at its second regular session of 2001.

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coverage has been maintained at 95 per cent for the past five years. The infant mortality rate is low at 26 per 1,000 live births, while under-five mortality due to acute respiratory infections and measles have been reduced by 31 and 95 per cent, respectively, in the past decade. Moderate/severe malnutrition is below 1 per cent and the incidence of low birth weight is 8.5 per cent, using Thai growth standards. Iodized salt reaches 93 per cent of the population, and iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) have been virtually eliminated. However, there is little information on urinary iodine, the recommended indicator for IDD. There is almost universal access to safe drinking water and excreta disposal. Gross enrolment in 1998 was 91 per cent, and 93 per cent of children continue their education until end of grade six. These achievements have helped to assure the survival and basic development of children.

3. There is growing concern, however, about 9 million children in the second decade of life, increasing numbers of whom are at risk and in need of special protection. Estimates of the number of children engaged in prostitution vary from 60,000 to 200,000. A government estimate reveals that 5 per cent of child prostitutes were found to be boys. Although child labour has reportedly declined from about 2.6 million in 1992, it is estimated that about 1 million children were still engaged as child workers in the first quarter of 1999.

4. HIV/AIDS remains a major threat despite the Government's intensive efforts to combat it. Its prevalence among women attending prenatal clinics is about 2 per cent nationally. An estimated 5,000 HIV-infected children are born annually to these women, reflecting the cycle of transmission from partner, to mother to child. A UNICEF study conducted in Thailand with the Global Orphans Project in 1999 estimated that more than 500,000 children were directly affected by HIV/AIDS. Of that number, 7 per cent had already lost their mothers, 11 per cent had mothers living with AIDS and 83 per cent were living with HIV-infected mothers. The growing numbers of vulnerable groups include intravenous drug users, customers of sex workers, HIV-infected youth and HIV/AIDS orphans.

5. The economic crisis of 1997 initially resulted in a sharp increase in unemployment and difficult living conditions for poor income groups. As workers lost their jobs, the limited resources of rural families were also drained due to reverse migration of these workers from cities. By 1999, an estimated 15 per cent of the population were living below the poverty line, and income disparities remained high. The Government has been able to provide a minimum level of social protection to vulnerable groups and has maintained budget allocations to social sectors at 1997 levels. This has enabled continuity and accessibility of basic social services to all population groups and also prevented a major deterioration in social indicators despite a drop in the per capita gross national product from $2,500 in 1996 to $1,960 by 1999. Therefore, while accessibility of basic social services has been maintained, the quality may have declined. A UNICEF/World Bank study on social capital completed in January 2000 indicated that families had rapidly and substantially adjusted their household spending and savings patterns to prioritize health and education for their children. The study also underlined the cohesiveness of communities and their capacity for coping and self-help. A number of studies concluded that women were hardest hit by the crisis and were most relied upon by their families to make ends meet by taking advantage of the social capital and networks. Girls were also hard hit and were more likely to be taken out of school than boys.

Lessons learned from past cooperation

6. Successive annual reviews and specific thematic reviews with partners have shown Thailand's steady progress in improving basic services. They have also recognized the need for sustainability, quality improvement, disparity reduction and addressing emerging and persistent challenges such as HIV/AIDS, child labour, domestic violence and trafficking. In that context, a two-pronged approach has emerged as relevant and effective for UNICEF programming. The first is to pursue national-level strategies to promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, with a special emphasis on analysis, advocacy, policy development and technical support in selected areas such as child protection. The second is to promote a new area-focused approach that will use the limited resources available to develop replicable models aimed at enhancing family capabilities, strengthening communities and helping the most disadvantaged.

7. The lessons learned were also related to a number of critical challenges, including the need to: enhance advocacy with analyses; focus on systems and institutions; promote greater multisectoral collaboration; strengthen the linkage of local institutions with communities; and develop capacities at local levels for participatory planning, implementation and monitoring of activities. Thailand's recent emphasis on local development planning within a decentralized framework opened up new programmatic opportunities, particularly in the area of child protection and child-friendly schools. The new Government Education Policy Reform further enhances such opportunities for decentralized approaches. The Ninth Plan strategy reinforces efforts to strengthen the role of the home, temple, schools, community, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society towards building a multisectoral approach for local development. The emphasis on the family unit, with a focus on those members who tend to be the most disadvantaged (daughters and mothers), fits in well with the integrated programming and life cycle approach UNICEF is evolving. Family and community empowerment need to be based on gender analysis to ensure that any discriminatory practices against daughters and women are eliminated.

8. Past achievements and strategies were to be reviewed following the economic crisis, which affected some promising initiatives. The community-based early childhood development (ECD) programme, previously supported by UNICEF and designed to go to scale, has been delayed due to financial constraints. The scope exists for the integration of ECD as part of basic education, with greater mobilization of communities and the provision of technical and financial resources to local government agencies. As UNICEF-supported activities shifted more towards the second decade of a child's life, ECD issues beyond survival became more prominent as an area for greater attention.

9. The scope and potential for diverse but complementary partnerships with civil society, NGOs, the private sector, United Nations agencies, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other regional bodies have grown as social and human development issues started converging more around the child and family. In this context, the CCA/UNDAF process, as well as the country-level consultations organized by international and regional financial institutions, have helped to facilitate collaborative action. UNICEF witnessed encouraging results during the past four years in regard to raising funds from local sources, including the private

sector. This promising trend, even in the midst of the ongoing economic crisis, could be consolidated to evolve a more self-reliant UNICEF operation in Thailand.

Proposed country programme strategy

10. The Government's Ninth Development Plan, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the End-Decade Review based on the World Summit for Children and Thailand's National Programme of Action for Children, as well as the master plan of operations prepared for the current programme (1999-2003), together with the UNICEF global medium-term plan, all provide the framework and guidelines for the next country programme (2002-2006). Accordingly, the main objectives of the 2002-2006 country programme will be to support the Government and civil society efforts to: (a) highlight and address disparity reduction issues, with targeted interventions for disadvantaged and marginalized groups, and an emphasis on both access to and quality of basic services; (b) focus on issues concerning the holistic development, participation and protection of children; (c) sharpen the public focus on emerging issues related to children's and women's rights, including child labour, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS, etc., through policy studies, advocacy and targeted interventions; (d) advocate for child rights using principles of the two Conventions to enhance awareness at all levels of Government and civil society; expand and strengthen the constituency for children; and mobilize technical, human and financial resources; and (e) promote regional cooperation through the exchange of technical expertise and programme experiences with other countries on child survival, development, protection and participation. Accordingly, the new country programme structure will continue to be strengthened around the four programme components described below.

11. The major strategy of the **child protection and development** programme will be to enhance the capacities of the family and community to ensure child survival, development and protection. Training and sensitization of newly empowered members of local authorities will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of community-based solutions for child protection and development. Education will be used as a cross-cutting strategy for life-long learning, with an emphasis on life skills development, preparation for adolescence and parenthood, the prevention of child labour, HIV/AIDS, trafficking and drug abuse. Schools will be supported as entry points for improving teaching/learning capacities, developing rights-based approaches, promoting effective school/community linkages and integrating community-based processes. National-level advocacy and capacity-building strategies will emphasize child protection, including trafficking, law enforcement, juvenile justice, HIV/AIDS and reinforcing mechanisms for prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

12. The **promotion of child rights and disparity reduction** programme will employ a mix of advocacy, communication and social mobilization strategies. It will combine mass media and other public education approaches to enhance awareness at all levels and foster changes in attitudes, and initiate good practices on child rights in public and private sectors as well as within communities and families. Training will focus on building communication capacity among partner organizations to strengthen participatory processes involving youth, family and community, and promote more informed choices in areas such as ECD, HIV/AIDS, child protection,

trafficking and education. Both formal and informal channels will be explored, including traditional and religious leaders and peer groups, advertising and public relations firms, the entertainment industry and mass media organizations. Communication and social mobilization strategies will also be oriented to fund-raising to expand programme delivery mainly at subnational levels. The demonstration and dissemination of results, as well as exchange of experience, will further strengthen the constituency for fund-raising and partnerships for children.

13. The **social policy analysis and monitoring the goals** programme will strengthen advocacy and policy dialogue as well as programme development and partnership-building. Initial studies will aim at increasing knowledge and awareness of social protection issues and other emerging concerns such as the social impact of economic policies, social safety nets, and the effectiveness and financing of basic services. Collaboration with other agencies and the availability of additional funds will support research on the underlying and structural causes of protection, survival and other development problems. ChildInfo, a computerized information system with a provision for geographic and disaggregated data presentations, will be used as a tool at subdistrict, district and provincial levels for advocacy, planning and monitoring. It will also ensure monitoring of child rights and the situation of children, with the assistance of a child vulnerability index by region/province.

14. The **technical cooperation among developing countries** programme will help in advocacy, programme development and partnership-building, as well as in sharing of Thai experiences with other countries to promote regional cooperation. A programme of site visits and briefs, within professionally designed training courses, will be developed with universities, government departments, other United Nations agencies and appropriate NGOs. In addition, networking among different levels of Government, NGOs and community self-help groups will be promoted further for better coordination and experience-sharing, internally. In this context, links with collaborating institutions, universities and NGOs will be promoted to facilitate study programmes, develop training materials and document best practices.

15. Monitoring and evaluation will form an integral and logical component of the programme planning and implementation process. This will be systematized with an integrated monitoring and evaluation plan covering continuous project, regular programme and periodic monitoring of the status of children and families, coupled with thematic evaluations of key programme areas or projects.

16. Principal institutional partners will be the Prime Minister's Office (Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation, National Youth Bureau, National Economic and Social Development Board, National Statistics Office, Attorney General's Office); the Ministries of Interior, Education, Health, Justice, Labour and Social Welfare; universities; research and development institutes; mass media; the private sector; and NGOs.

Estimated programme budget

17. The estimated regular resources budget for the five-year period 2002-2006 will be allocated by programme on the basis of ongoing dialogue with the Government as per the country programme recommendation. Other resources will be raised from local sources and external donors. The prevalence of economic uncertainty and the transitional nature of the country programme will require both flexibility and

innovative responses and budgetary provisions to new developments and emerging issues.

Estimated programme cooperation, 2002-2006[a]

(In thousands of United States dollars)

	Regular resources	*Other resources*	*Total*
Child protection and development	1 850	8 933	10 783
Promotion of child rights and disparity reduction	908	2 200	3 108
Social policy analysis and monitoring the goals	884	700	1 584
Technical cooperation among developing countries	350	200	550
Cross-sectoral costs	697	-	697
Total	**4 689**	**12 033**	**16 722**

[a] These are indicative figures only which are subject to change once aggregate financial data are finalized.